

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 015

CS 206 277

AUTHOR Sewell, Ernestine P., Ed.
 TITLE Passages.
 INSTITUTION Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English,
 Houston.
 PUB DATE 81
 NOTE 22p.; The Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English
 is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers
 of English.
 JOURNAL CIT English in Texas; v12 n4 Sum 1981
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Abstract Reasoning; Classroom Techniques; *English
 Instruction; Experiential Learning; Higher Education;
 Interdisciplinary Approach; Listening Skills;
 Literature Appreciation; Music; Parody; Popular
 Culture; Professional Development; Public Support;
 *Retraining; Secondary Education; Sentence Combining;
 *Student Motivation; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teaching
 Methods; *Writing Instruction; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue reflect the theme of "passages." Five articles contain teachers' reflections and descriptions of the following forms of passage: (1) passing from the classroom to motherhood and back again; (2) passing from academe to the world of work--the retraining of literature professors; (3) ways in which students gain perspectives of their own "passages" through experience-based motivation for writing; (4) ideas for helping students "pass" to more sophisticated listening skills; and (5) helping students in the passage to abstract levels of thinking. Other articles deal with skillful sentence combining, teaching popular literature, teaching rhetorical stance through music and parody, and public support for the teaching of writing. (RL)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *



English in Texas

Volume 12, Number 4

Summer 1981

ED202015

CS206277

With this issue of *English in Texas*, the editor completes a three-year appointment. We may very well, then, label its theme "Passages."

A glance at the contents of the current issue reinforces the concept of "passages." Karen Lewis Dale's article recaptures the mood of the nineteenth century informal essayists as she "passes" from the classroom to motherhood and back again — to greater challenges but with more understanding. Lynne Spigelmire "passes" from the secure ivied walls of academia to the world of work that has no jobs for literature teachers but will make a place for the person willing to "pass" through the portals under the aegis of "writing teacher." Agnes L. Whittle directs her students to gain perspective of their own "passages" through experience-based motivation for writing.

Contributors Marion L. Manning and Beverly Boals share ideas for helping students to "pass" to sophisticated listening skills, and Gloria McGettigan provides the students with a ladder for "passage" to abstract levels of thinking. Robert Wilson also directs attention to the mental acuity involved in skillful sentence-combining.

"Passages" — the concept also suggests a retrospective. Hence the cover. Our editorial staff can boast that the "Focus on Folklore" and the "Focus on Technical Writing" have been committed to microfiche by ERIC, that NCTE is considering purchase of publication rights to "In Search of the 'Write' Way," that our poetry will be included in an on-going bibliography published by Swallow Press, and that many copyrights have been released to the authors for further publication in far away places, as Japan, not to speak of class-size purchases for practical use as teaching aids.

From then to the now and to the will-be, we look forward to your continued support of *English in Texas*. The challenges of the future are yours to define.

Ernestine P. Sewell
The University of Texas
at Arlington

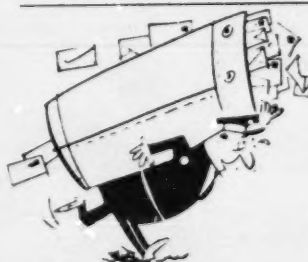
Passages

My Daughter the Language Lab Karen Lewis Dale	84
Creativity and Listening: An Integrative Teaching Approach Marion L. Manning Beverly Boals	86
Finding a Via Media for Teaching Popular Literature Eugene Smith	88
Content-Directed, Experience-Based Writing Agnes L. Whittle	92
Incorporation in the Act of Sentence-Combining Robert L. Wilson	93
After Leaving George Eliot: Notes on the Retraining of a Literature Ph.D. Lynne Spigelmire	94
A Fifth of Parody: Teaching Rhetorical Stance Through Music and Parody William McMurry, Jr.	97
The Teaching of Writing: Is the Public Finally Ready to Support It? Mary McElroy	99
Teaching Students to Think Gloria O. McGettigan	100
Research in Texas	101

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Texas Joint Council of

Teachers of English

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



CALL FOR PAPERS

Contributions are invited for Volume 13 of *English in Texas*:
LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS: deadline, July 15;
THE RELATIONS OF FILM, FILM-MAKERS, AND
FILM-MAKING TO COMMUNICATION ARTS: deadline,
August 15; A MISCELLANY: deadline, September 14.

Send papers to Ernestine P. Sewell, Box 19035, The University
of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019.

My Daughter the Language Lab

In the middle of my life I entered a dark passage from which I saw no exit. After twelve years of teaching freshman rhetoric in a calm, traditional fashion I felt no challenge, no excitement when I entered a classroom. Indeed, I felt increasing confusion and irritation because over the years strange utterings began to appear on students' papers, things like, "I seen him when he done it," and commas began to appear in places where I knew commas had no business. I didn't know what to do with such nonsense as that. I'd never had a grammar course, couldn't really tell my students the rules for comma use or explain why "He seen" was wrong, but these appalling aberrations multiplied until they threatened to take over my world. Something had to be done; teaching freshman English was no fun anymore. So — in a fit of creative frustration — I decided to have a child.

Now contemplate for a moment the fate of a baby placed in the hands of a thirty-five old English teacher whose life had been dedicated to the beauties of the English language as a vehicle for great philosophical perceptions. One imagines, I'm sure, a child of astounding linguistic accomplishment, and I rush to say that is certainly true. After all, she learned her mother tongue at her mother's knee.

At the same time that Alison mastered the basic sentence "Go Car," my professional life improved because my chairman had developed a basic English course to which linguistic dunderheads were assigned, leaving me free to teach the principles of rhetoric, organization and development as I had always done. But relief was not to last long, for that same chairman began to mutter that I was the only member of his faculty who had never taught a section of basic English. He then not only saddled me with a section of dunderhead English, but he also put me on the Freshman Committee which was charged with the grading of all final examinations given in the basic course. I felt like Alice in Nightmareland.

Meanwhile, my child the language lab continued to delight all with her increasingly sophisticated pronounce-

ments. So taken was I with this linguistic microcosm that I began to devour books on cognitive development and language learning. I read Piaget and Vygotsky and Roger Brown and began to subscribe to *Language Arts* in preparation of the day when I would teach my child to read and write. Then I began to hear things creeping into her speech that I also saw on my students' papers. She was no more willing to learn "proper" grammar than they were. No matter how I screamed, she still insisted that "Granny bringed me a book." Finally, however, she gave up "bringed" — and went on to "broughted."

At some point in the last two years — a long moment of revelation — cognitive psychology, linguistic development, English grammar, child and students all came together to give me a new vision of language and the language learning process and of the logic behind my students' ungrammatical utterings. Thus from darkness was hope born.

This idea of logic is important. In all my years of teaching writing skills, it had never occurred to me that the *right* way was illogical and inconsistent, and the wrong way perfectly logical and consistent. Right had to be logical, right? Wrong! The students I had assumed to be irrational, unthinking dunderheads were writing sentences that exhibited clearly consistent rules. They were not, however, the rules of the grammar books. They were rules arrived at inductively in the early stages of speech, arrived at by listening to language and generalizing from what was heard.

Consider my daughter who insisted on "Granny bringed me a book." She *heard* "he talked, walked, danced, admitted, cried." Thus, Rule One: All past tense verbs end in *-ed*. So Alison, like most two years olds, said "He buyed, eated, dranked, holded, catched and bringed." And even when I corrected her, saying "brought" each time I heard the abhorrent "bringed," she still clung to her *-ed* rule and carefully added it to the new word, thus: broughted. Currently she has given up on that past tense form and decided to try another. Since she has accepted the

fact that *some* verbs are irregular in the past tense, *sing* being one of them, she now proudly announces, "Granny brang me a book." Each one of her forms is logical, the result of inductive reasoning, of fumbling through what she hears to find a rule that fits the verb.

Many of our students in basic English are operating on about the same linguistic level that Alison is. They speak and write by "rules" learned inductively from what they heard as small children. Often the language they heard was based on an oral linguistic heritage, thus contains generation after generation the same kinds of logical but non-standard patterns. One rule that governs the linguistic patterns of many of our students is very clear and — again — logical. Rule: if a plural noun subject ends in *s* so does its verb. Thus, *Cows makes milk*. The reverse is equally true: if the noun does not end in *s* neither does the verb. *Cow make milk*. Aren't those rules based on a far more logical, consistent concept of language than a rule which says if the noun subject ends in *s* the verb doesn't?

Another dialectal form we encounter is the use of *be* as a present tense, first person verb form. *I be going*. But why not? All other verbs are the infinitive form in the first person, present tense: *To sit, I sit; to go, I go; to contemplate, I contemplate; to revitalize, I revitalize*. So what is logical about saying *to be going, I am going*?

Once I began to listen to my daughter's language learning process, I began to understand why my students made most of their grammatical errors and why they have resisted for so long the "rules" English teachers give them. Rules are supposed to be logical, consistent. But their "rules" are better than ours — that is, more logical, more consistent.

Another set of errors we see on student papers is a clear indication of two things: their ears are their guides, and they've grudgingly accepted the fact that there *are* irregularities, but they expect those irregularities to follow some regular — usually ear-oriented — pattern. The student who writes, "I had

two test," gets his paper back marked *noun inflection*, -10. That student knows very well that plural nouns are formed by adding *s*, but he also knows there are irregular plurals. Since he doesn't *hear* the *s* on *tests*, he thinks this must be one of them.

Until I listened to my own child learn language I didn't realize that very small children begin to form such generalizations about language patterns even before they begin to speak or that those generalizations frequently become over-generalizations — like my daughter's *ed* rule — to which they cling for years, unconsciously and unknowingly, even though teachers undoubtedly (or "undoubtedly," as my students say) returned their papers marked *verb agr*. I suspect such marks usually left the student so puzzled that he retreated even more into his own rules — at least they made good sense.

There is, for most students in basic English, a time of great confusion when we begin to introduce them to the "new" rules of grammar. I used to assume that I was addressing a class of blank tablets where grammar was concerned, and so I would become angry with the student who wrote fairly well on the first paper or two but began to disintegrate on the third or fourth — *after* I had given him some "rules" of grammar. It never occurred to me that I had introduced some complexities and irregularities that contradicted his inductively reached "rules," so left him in total confusion, frantically clinging to the "old," not yet ready for the new. We've all had the student who writes dependent clause fragments — but no subject-verb errors — until we teach him how to use subordinators. Fragments disappear, but, lo, every time he begins a dependent clause with a relative pronoun he writes a subject-verb agreement error: "I made a list of the people that is invited to my party." In frustration I used to see such students as going backward, not realizing that they were in a state of transition — having a serious case of "rule" identity — and would probably be able to make the adjustment from their rules to mine by the end of the semester.

Nor did I realize that most of us learn the rules of written language inductively as well, deciding where to put periods, commas, semicolons, conquering non-phonetic spelling and learning the conventions of written language through our reading experiences. But first graders learn to write, fumble through a process of discovering where

periods belong, not because someone tells them where periods belong, but because they are *seeing* the use of periods and reaching generalizations about what they have seen. In fact, I suspect if children simply read extensively through the grade school years and were given little or no instruction in grammar and mechanics they would write better than they do now because there would be no rule confusion.

So what have I discovered about language learning? First it is ear-centered; only later does it become eye-centered, a process most of our students have not mastered because they have had so little reading experience that they have few "rules" by which to write. Yet they do have many "rules" for ear-centered language, rules based on inductive reasoning and firmly fixed — for better or worse — in their heads. When asked to write they simply reply on their ear-oriented rules, transferring them to paper where we mark them in red ink without attempting to understand the logic behind them.

What implications have my late-life discoveries for my teaching in the future? One conclusion I can draw is that my concept of "standard" English is outdated and elitist and that I must lead a movement to replace the conventions of standard, written English with the more logical patterns of oral language, but my irrational mind refuses to give up the marvelously complex and inconsistent thing we call standard English. Besides, I have never been brave enough to be a revolutionary. I have only the more modest goal of using the ear-oriented, logical "rules" our basic students write by to help them replace those rules with the illogical rules we claim are right.

But how? First, I think we must begin by understanding and discussing the logic of English and how they learned the language they speak and write. For one thing, this makes them feel better about their own language and certainly helps them to weather the period of confusion when every "rule" they wrote by begins to fall apart — and red marks on their papers begin to increase. For another, it makes them much more aware of the language they speak and hear. They begin to listen and to understand their own linguistic heritage. And as they listen, they learn. One student stopped me in the middle of a sentence to shout, "Hey, I just heard that 'effect' is a noun and 'affect' is a verb!" It's a start.

A discussion of how we learn lan-

guage also helps my students learn to use our writing lab at UH/DC. The lab combines taped explanations and exercises with the same materials in writing. I urge my students to use the lab facilities to *listen* to the patterns on tape and see if they can discover "rules" simply by listening. They then listen and read at the same time, noting how voice rhythms and inflections translate into sentence patterns and punctuation marks. In those students who use the writing lab consistently I see marked improvement in sentence structure, punctuation and spelling as well as in whatever specific grammar problem they're working on. They improve largely because they are listening at the same time they are reading, learning to induce patterns through both eye and ear. Sound drills in class, insisting that students say a sentence aloud before they write it down, having them read their papers aloud, having them copy as I dictate, perhaps even teaching phonetics — though I have not attempted that formally — are all ways in which we must approach the language problems of our basic students.

We decry the audio-visual orientation of our current society, blaming it for the linguistic weaknesses of our college freshmen, and certainly it has affected the numbers of students who do not read enough to acquire written skills inductively, but if the initial acquisition of language comes through ear-oriented, inductive reasoning — reaching generalizations based on what is heard and revising those generalizations as we realize that language contains rules within rules, rules for irregulars, as it were, then I think we must approach the basic English student through his ear, always trying to understand what rules the ear has formed and how we can best replace his logical rules with the often illogical rules of standard English grammar. So convinced am I that we must re-orient the ears of our basic English students that I have tried to integrate audio-equipment and rules of standard grammar in my basic classes. Ideally — given an unlimited budget I would give each student a recorder, insisting that he compose on it, record with it the various patterns of language he hears, listen, write what he heard, read passages from written works and examine ways in which the oral language is translated to the conventions of written language. ♦

Creativity and Listening: An Integrative Teaching Approach

THE NEGLECT

Listening skills are being neglected in many language arts programs. Perhaps, the most serious deficiency is in the area of critical listening. Whether this neglect is falsely based on the assumption that all children learn to listen or the belief that listening cannot be taught, instruction in listening is being slighted in favor of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking. This prerequisite to competency in other language arts must be realized and methodical steps initiated to correct the situation.

According to Van Allen (1976), the skills promoting the ability to listen critically to a speaker include:

- listening to analyze the purpose of the one speaking by recognizing bias, exaggerated statements, and false connotations
- listening for conflicting ideas by the same speaker
- being aware of propaganda techniques, half-truths, and name calling.

The mass media, politicians, and sales pitches influencing children today demand that language arts programs accept the responsibility for teaching critical listening skills.

RESEARCH

Though seemingly an evasive subject difficult to teach, research provides evidence that listening can be successfully taught. Devine (1978) reported on a 1955 study of three hundred fifth grade pupils. Systematic instruction in the form of listening comprehension was administered in an attempt to measure the ability to summarize, draw

inferences, recall facts in sequence, and remember facts accurately. According to the study, listening abilities improved with direct instruction.

Russell (1964) reports a study of 264 fifth and sixth grade students. Four components of critical listening ability were examined:

- general analysis and inference
- reasons for fallacies in organization
- value judgments regarding propaganda
- factual judgments of arguments.

A test was administered to determine three aspects: 1) detecting the speaker's purpose, 2) analysis and judgment of propaganda, and 3) analysis and judgment of the article. The conclusion of the study was that context, concepts, processes, and the abilities in critical listening are amenable to empirical analysis and can be improved by practice.

INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLES

Creative instructional examples are provided that may be considered appropriate for kindergarten through third grade and fourth through sixth grade. Flexibility will be the key in using the suggestions. Changes may be required in vocabulary, complexity of material, and levels of thinking skills and listening skills.

PRIMARY GRADES (K-3rd)

Example I

"Let's Take a Trip"

The teacher begins by saying, "I'm going on a trip to _____ (any country or location the children may have been studying) and I'm going to take (a) (an) _____. The teacher then says items that will be taken on

the trip. When an inappropriate item is called, the children say, "Stop." The correction is made. After a short period, the teacher should have each child indicate items he or she would take on the trip. Again, the children say "Stop" when an inappropriate item is mentioned.

Example: "I'm going on a trip to the North Pole and I'm going to take a snow sled, my snow skis, and my swimming suit." At this point, the children would say "Stop," the correction will be made, and the activity will proceed.

Example II

"What Do You Hear?"

This activity requires a tape recording of sounds such as a car horn, a train whistle, people talking, people yelling, a person laughing, birds chirping, dogs barking, a cat meowing, or similar sounds.

The teacher plays the recording for the children telling them the source of the sound. After the children have heard the recording and are familiar with the sound and their sources, the teacher plays the recordings, giving the wrong sources for some of the sounds. As he or she gives an incorrect response, the children say "Beep-Beep." The teacher stops, the children name the right source, and the activity continues.

Example III

"What is the Weather?" (Season, Month, or Holiday)

To begin this activity, the teacher gives a description of the weather for that particular day. While giving correct descriptions of the weather, he or she includes some descriptions which are incorrect. When a child hears an in-

correct description, he or she says, "Weather Alert." The teacher stops, is corrected, and the activity continues. This activity can be carried out using the seasons of the year instead of the weather of the day. As the children learn the months of the year, the activity can be done describing the months and holidays of the year.

Example: I'm describing the month of December. In December, it's cold, we wear our coats to school, we sometimes have snow in December. In December, we pick flowers on the playground. At this point the children say "Stop," the correction is made, and the activity continues.

UPPER ELEMENTARY GRADES (4th-6th)

Instruction for the upper elementary grades utilizes basically the same method but will demand higher levels of thought and creativity.

Example I "Tricks of Language"

This activity demonstrates to students various tricks of language. Through creative listening, the student will realize that some words bring positive thoughts while others cause a negative connotation. The teacher reads a random selection of advertising slogans and statements containing tricks of language. Some may include:

- impressive sounding words — table seasoning or salt, fragrance or odor; many doctors recommend . . . ; everyone knows that . . . ; authorities state that Such words or phrases carry great influencing power.
- words conveying favorable or unfavorable meanings — our forefathers,

peace, family, Yankee, a *good* can opener; it is *true* that . . . ; the *average* American, or he *droned on and on*.

Creative listening guidelines may be established for the creative listener such as the following: Can the statement be verified? Who, when, where, and why is the statement being made? Also, the students may bring to class brief samples of political statements, or a radio, television, or magazine advertisement. Using the guidelines proposed by the students and teacher, the statements may be creatively evaluated.

Example II "Is an Argument Being Suggested?"

This activity requires students to listen to words or phrases to determine whether an argument is being suggested. The teacher suggests words or phrases that people might use in conversing with one another. By listening creatively, students must select the ones that suggest an argument:

Hardly!

Certainly!

Do you expect me to believe that?

I probably disagree.

I should say not.

If you say so.

I'd be glad to.

Students may think of other words and phrases showing possible disagreement.

The class can discuss each situation.

Example III "Detecting the Logical Fallacy"

Upper elementary students can be given the opportunity to listen for logical fallacies through a short exercise such as the following. The teacher can recite about six or eight lines of a story and interject an incongruous line. The

students must listen for the misplaced line.

Sam went to the ocean.

The ocean was rough with many waves. He walked in the water searching for shells.

Christmas comes in December.

Sam wanted to remain at the beach all summer.

He will return to the city from the beach.

Students may write and read to the class their own stories with logical fallacies. The listeners can attempt to hear the misplaced line.

SUMMARY

Instruction in listening, especially creative listening, has not been provided in the elementary school. However, research indicates that creativity and listening can be successfully nurtured simultaneously. Few instances exist when creativity and listening are integrated. This paper has suggested integrating creative and listening activities for both the primary and upper elementary grades. The activities should be considered as guides and be used with flexibility with a consideration of the individual instructional situation. The ideas presented presume to be a beginning point rather than a final document.

END NOTES

Allen, Roach Van. *Language Experiences in Communication*. Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1976.

Devine, Thomas. "Listening: What Do We Know After Fifty Years of Research and Theorizing?" *Journal of Reading*, 21:296-304, January, 1978.

Russell, David. "A Conspectus of Recent Research on Listening Abilities," *Elementary English*, 41:262-267, March, 1964.

Finding a Via Media for Teaching Popular Literature

In the spirit of diversifying undergraduate offerings, especially for non-majors in English, our department instituted three courses titled "Children's Literature Reconsidered," "The Writer as Social Critic," and "Popular Fiction." During the seven years of their availability, they have often attracted larger numbers of students than any other literature course. While this condition has been good for FTEs and therefore for the budgetary health of the department, it has caused consternation among some of our faculty.

Are such courses legitimate in an esteemed English department? Can students learn to read and write in more complex ways if they are presented with second-rate (or worse) material? Can faculty be expected to sustain their interest in the material for such courses, since it is usually remote from their scholarly interests?

These are some of the questions which have aroused debate and have led to no certain conclusions other than to continue offering "Children's Literature" and "Popular Fiction."

I have taught both of these courses several times and find them not only suitable for English departments but also excellent for inducting often skittish and naive students into some of the intricacies of mature reading and writing. My most recent experience with "Popular Fiction" may suggest ways of investing such a course with serious purpose and of integrating possibly more disparate activities than one finds in the typical college literature course.

The lists of texts chosen by the various instructors for sections of this course show great variation in defining "popular": from widely read books of the nineteenth century or earlier to books that have not the remotest claim

to being Literature. One instructor even stretched the term to include pornographic novels.

My approach was to define "popular" according to genres that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have consistently claimed large numbers of readers from many social and intellectual levels. The mystery story (or the detective/crime/police/suspense story, depending upon whose sub-classificatory scheme you choose) and science fiction meet that test admirably. Julian Symons asserts, "Crime literature is almost certainly more widely read than any other class of fiction in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in many other countries not under Communist rule The readership of this literature cuts across definition by class or income group."¹

As for the popularity of "science fiction," a term even more elusive to define and subdivide than "mystery story," Norman Spinrad points out the irony in attitudes toward that genre. He suggests that, as soon as a potential best-selling "science fiction" novel is delivered to a publisher (e.g., *The Child Buyer*, *The Andromeda Strain*), "it is put in the packaging category of 'best seller'." Or if the writer is known as a "serious writer" (like Nabokov or Durrell), the novel with speculative content "gets packaged as a 'serious novel'."² What is left as "science fiction" may be that fiction which has been denied another status by publishers and has the aura of factual impossibility that we associate with non-naturalistic fiction.

The range of quality and tone is so vast within these two genres and the likelihood of accessibility to students so great that I consider them useful and durable categories from which to fashion a course.

But how should such a course be designed so as to capitalize on the qualities of inherent appeal and accessibility of the books and also to offer genuine intellectual challenge to students? I concede to students on the first or second day we meet that obviously they don't need to take a university course to be able to read these books with ease and satisfaction. They are not "difficult" the way *Walden* and *Moby Dick* are and do not require an experienced explicator in the person of a teacher. Furthermore, I tell them, I do not propose to make sociological or psychological exercises out of the books, overlaying them with learned lectures about technique and "hidden" significance that they could not be expected to discern for themselves.

A better approach seems to be to choose fiction that may cumulatively lead students toward asking productive questions about the writers' techniques and the possible significance of the worlds they present: to encourage the habit of asking such questions, of using them to place books into relationships with each other and with "real world" experiences, and of actively making evaluative judgments about quality of writing. This seems a desirable way to encourage continued and perceptive reading both in the popular realm (the one which most students will continue to explore after they leave the university) and in the more esoteric literary one they may pursue in subsequent courses.

Assuming that I make adroit choices of fiction and create assignments that can carry out these lofty aims, "Popular Fiction" becomes very much like any other college literature course in overall purpose. The aim of all such courses, I take it, is to produce better readers of imaginative literature. That

can be done with a children's nursery rhyme, a crime novel, or a Shakespearean sonnet.

Both to impress upon students my seriousness of purpose and to forecast the considerable amount of thinking I expected of them, I devised a six-page handout for the first class meeting. Subject to revision, it contained week-by-week assignments: starting and finishing times for each novel (to assure clarity about what we would be discussing at any given point in the quarter), due dates and general subjects of seven papers, and preliminary assignments for a videotaped group discussion and non-verbal project. It also contained a list of choices for an extra mystery/detective novel (the classification I settled on) arranged according to the name of detectives who appear in more than one book by each author. Other information for frequent later reference included a list of questions about mystery/detective fiction that I hoped would provide a comprehensive context for thinking about the genre and any particular example of it. And I included a list of eight books on reserve, references that supplied historical background and critical comment on mystery/detective and science fiction. Finally, to begin the essential process of making clear my evaluative criteria for students' performance, I included multiple copies of two assessment forms: "Criteria for Assessment of Weekly Papers" and "Criteria for Assessment of Discussion Participation." (See addenda.)

I had chosen five mystery/detective novels to be read by everyone and arranged them in a sequence from easiest to most difficult so far as moral and technical complexity were concerned. The books were *The Chill* (Ross Macdonald), *The Man on the Balcony* (Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö), *The Thin Man* (Dashiell Hammett), *The Secret of Father Brown* (G.K. Chesterton), and last, *The Quarry* (Friedrich Dürrenmatt). The "extra novel" choices included books by Wilkie Collins, Nicholas Freeling, Simenon, Arthur Conan Doyle, Dorothy Sayers, E.W. Hornung, Nicholas Blake, Agatha Christie, and Dashiell Hammett — some of the past "greats" in the field as well as current writers. Since I reckoned that, after the first week of introduction (featuring my oral reading of portions of Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," a good reference for establishing the historical beginning of detective fiction and several of the

conventions of the genre), we would need at least one week per book, I included only one book of science fiction, Spinrad's *Modern Science Fiction*, a collection of short stories that represents "the Golden Age" and "the Full Flowering" of science fiction.

To assure discussion momentum and fairly serious preparation for it, I asked the students to keep one book ahead of whatever we were discussing. Thus, during the first week they were reading *The Chill*, and they prepared a paper on *The Chill* which was to be read by several other students in the class on Monday of the second week. Discussion of that book was therefore triggered by the papers. I followed this procedure each week. Combined with my attendance policy ("If you miss more than five classes during the ten-week quarter, you receive no credit for the course."), the writing of the papers and the presentation of them in class resulted in almost everyone's having read the books on schedule and having something to say to others in the class. Each written assignment, given to students in midweek, specified a topic drawn from the book and also a purpose, a form, and an audience. The purpose was often to mount an argument for an opinion; the form was often the letter; and the audience was either fellow students or some specific imagined audience (identified, for example, as "a fundamentalist Christian, a Buddhist, an agnostic, a scientist" for one of the science fiction stories, or as a particular named person in our class). Students were also to staple one of the assessment forms, "Criteria for Assessment of Weekly Papers," to the essay.

The papers were read in groups of five or six, groups which remained stable in make-up through the sixth week of the quarter. I offered suggestions of several kinds as the groups continued to meet, asking that students refer often to the other assessment form, "Criteria for Assessment of Discussion Participation." I made it explicit that I consider small-group interaction, especially in a literature class, to be a significant part of the learning process and that these were not mere bull sessions; I expected intense and relevant interaction.

The format for each week varied according to my sense of what procedures might get most productive responses to the books and to students' papers. Sometimes small groups met for two successive days, followed by one or more days of large group dis-

cussion with me as leader. Other times, I varied the small group situation by requesting that a representative of each small group meet in "fish bowl" style in the center of the room (with other students arranged in two larger circles around the center), again usually with me as discussion leader. By using this combination of discussion settings, I hoped to get maximum possible participation in a class of thirty-five students and to avoid the monotony of the same procedure used every day.

As soon as weekly papers had been read and responded to orally by other students, I collected the papers and read them myself. I had announced that I would use pluses and minuses next to each of the four criteria, a plus being interpreted as 2.0 (C) or better. If any student wanted a more specific grade, s/he could request it by writing "Grade: _____" on the assessment sheet, though I did not record those grades. I explained that I had adopted this policy to forestall premature numerical evaluation and to reduce the common student preoccupation with grades. The assessment criteria would keep their attention on what was most important to accomplish in the paper, and my written comments and questions on the paper might suggest possibilities for further thought and for improvement in writing. Another part of the paper evaluation policy concerned those papers that merited three or four minuses. They must be rewritten, preferably within the next week, and returned to me. This policy had the effect of preventing negligence and of discouraging the kind of superficial thinking that students in beginning literature courses often display. I made the usually successful effort to return one week's papers before the next ones were due, an important part of keeping this dimension of discussion going meaningfully. I was especially anxious to prevent the writing of these papers from seeming merely an assignment to be done and handed in. I wanted students to use the papers as a genuine way of grappling with issues raised by me and the books, of articulating their opinions to more than one person who would respond directly, and of striving for improved ability to write about ideas coherently and persuasively.

In the second week, students chose an extra novel to read from the list I had provided. They made their choices so that at least five people were reading novels with a detective character in

common. That choice became the basis for their small group composition during the first six weeks. So, we had a Sherlock Holmes group, a Jules Maigret group, a Sergeant Cuff group, etc. As each person was reading the extra novel, s/he was discussing the week's assigned novel and occasionally the extra novel. The latter discussions culminated in the sixth week when each group went to a campus television studio to videotape a half-hour discussion. I had explained that I wanted them to have the opportunity to observe their own performance in discussion and that videotape was one of the most convenient ways to do that. I also explained that three of these discussions, chosen randomly, would be played back in class and that we would all comment on qualities of the discussion. After viewing all the tapes myself outside of class time, I supplemented those discussions with a written evaluation to each student, using the discussion assessment form. Students whose tapes had not been shown in class were invited to view them at some other time than the scheduled class meeting.

The viewing of the videotapes culminated our attention to mystery/detective fiction and served as a transition to reading science fiction and to revised small group membership. I reformed the groups to get a good mix of personal styles as I had come to know them in students, and, in a semi-playful spirit, I named each of the groups after a constellation: Cygnus, Cassiopeia, Crux, etc. Those names, I explained, seemed appropriate both because stars are associated with much science fiction and because a constellation is a brilliant gathering or assemblage and I considered each of them to be potentially brilliant in discussion. (They were not offended.) These new groups functioned much as before, the new configurations offering the possibility of much reinvigorated discussion. (Naming the groups is chiefly a time-saving help in organizing class session procedures.)

Also in the seventh week, I explained my concept of the purpose and value of a non-verbal response to one or more of the works of fiction we had read. Drawing on left- and right-brain theory, I explained that a non-verbal project allows for the expression of significant emotional responses to literature which often cannot be expressed in expository writing or may seem inappropriate in that form. Non-

verbal media such as paint, wood, plastic, "found" objects, photography — a list that could take up two chalkboards — could embody an idea or feeling in some organized form which was both expressive and aesthetically pleasing. Words could be a part of the object but should not be the major medium of expression. I also listed some of the principal criteria which seem appropriate to evaluating a non-verbal creation. I invited individuals to discuss the possibilities for such a project with me as they chose and reminded them that our quarter schedule called for in-class presentation during the last week of class.

We took three days for those presentations, the projects of approximately equal numbers of students displayed each day around the room. Each student had a written evaluation sheet which I had prepared. Titled "Response to Non-Verbal Project," it called for explanations of "what you expressed to me in this project," "what I think was successful about the internal organization of this project," "what I perceive as your probable reason for using the medium you did," and "my doubts or reservations about the success of your project." The use of this form assured that each student looked very carefully at several of the projects and attempted to articulate complex responses to them. Simply saying "I like it" or "I don't understand it" would not do. These written responses, along with mine, were returned within two days to each project originator. (I persuaded two students experienced in photography to take pictures of each project so that I could have a lasting record of these often remarkable sculptures, paintings, drawings, and assemblages. The photographing process probably also impressed the other students with the importance of what they had done. This was not sandbox and fingerpaint time!)

The last activity of the course was a take-home final exam. I explained that I think thoughtful and coherent critical responses to complex questions about literature are impossible to formulate under pressure in a two-hour exam. Moreover, I preferred to present to them questions that would encourage rethinking of the fiction we had read, putting it into new relationships and perhaps drawing forth new perceptions and understandings of its significance. To prepare them specifically for answering such questions — somewhat more difficult ones than they had been

handling in their weekly papers — I prepared a sample question that we discussed in class on our last scheduled meeting day. After that discussion I gave them three exam questions from which they were to choose two. I included with the exam another set of evaluation criteria, this time including assessment scales (known as "semantic differential scales") which would be used to arrive at five component grades for the exam performance. The final exam evaluation criteria appeared on a sheet labelled "End-of-Quarter Evaluation" which also included other sections: for grades on overall performance for seven weekly papers,³ completion of the videotaped discussion, and non-verbal project; for the number of class absences; and for a course grade. This sheet was returned with the final exam paper and any other left-over papers from the quarter. Students were therefore left with little doubt about how I had arrived at a course grade.

And I was left with little doubt that this voyage through "Popular Fiction" had been prosperous. Many students demonstrated orally and in writing that they could make more penetrating observations about fiction and could support their judgments more convincingly than they could initially. All seemed impressed with the amount of imagination and the level of craft displayed in the non-verbal projects. And most admitted that, though the videotaping of an unrehearsed discussion was an awesome prospect, the experience had revealed telling qualities about their contributions to a group's intellectual task.

From a teacher's standpoint, I see far more advantages than disadvantages to conducting a literature class in this unorthodox way. I reveal my assumptions about the desirable qualities of such a class when I list the following as positive features:

1. Group interaction is high. Everyone is participating in some way in nearly every class session. No one sleeps and no one sits passively.
2. The teacher steps aside from the role of authoritative interpreter but does not abdicate responsibility for defining purposes, tasks, procedures, or levels of expectation.
3. Assignments and class sessions allow considerable latitude for development of individual strengths; choices are always available to students as to the level of intensity and complexity for their participation.

4. Numerous opportunities exist for exercise of leadership initiative.

5. Because of the broad array of situations calling for oral, written, and non-verbal discourse, students perceive their performance from several perspectives.

6. An informal atmosphere — one which permits laughter, heated argument, and congenial exchange — prevails, while maintaining an underlying sense of need to be productive.

7. Students discover that their understanding of evaluation criteria evolves and that these criteria are neither arbitrary nor artificially imposed.

There is one principal disadvantage to departing from the standard procedure of lecturing, holding discussions among the eight or ten students who are brave enough to speak before the large group, and requiring a term paper and two exams. I spent at least twice as much time on this course as on the "typical" course, especially the standard course for which old lecture notes may serve for successive quarters. But in no way do I begrudge the extra time.

The via media I think I have found combines many of the revered aims of an undergraduate literature course with recent insights into learning theory. It

makes popular literature serious as an object of study without forcing it into a conventional academic mold that often drives fledgling students of literature away from any further serious literary study.

END NOTES

¹ *Mortal Consequences* (Shoken Books, 1972), pp. 5-6.

² *Modern Science Fiction* (Anchor Books, 1974), p. 2.

³ This grade was based on an overall impression which I had formed of each student's papers and not on a summary of grades. I had recorded only checkmarks in my record of students' work, believing that secret recording of grades is unethical. ➤

Addenda

Name _____

Paper # _____

Criteria for Assessment of Weekly Papers*

- _____ Makes a point relevant to the book or story and relevant to the assigned question.
- _____ Demonstrates the writer's attempt to deal with a complex idea.
- _____ Uses evidence (such as examples, details, extended analysis) to support main idea.
- _____ Meets reasonable format standards (e.g., legibility, proofreading).

*Criteria will be applied as + or —, unless otherwise requested by student (+ signifies 2.0 or better; — signifies below 2.0)

Name _____

Criteria for Assessment of Discussion Participation*

- _____ Makes comments relevant to topic for discussion.
- _____ Asks questions that help group to focus its topic, to summarize, or to assess the significance of what has previously been said.
- _____ Listens attentively to others' comments.
- _____ Responds to others' comments pointedly and tactfully.
- _____ Demonstrates preparation for discussion (e.g., appropriate page references, suitable examples, comments supported by sound reasoning).

*Criteria will be applied as + or —, unless otherwise requested by student (+ signifies 2.0 or better; — signifies below 2.0)



Idea Exchange

Agnes L. Whittle
Lunenburg County School District, Virginia

Content-Directed, Experience-Based Writing

The ability to express oneself effectively and fluently through writing is an art and a skill, both of which unfortunately are becoming lost with new developments in multi-media and mass communication. The cumbersome task of letter writing can speedily be resolved by picking up the telephone; invitations for all but the most formal affairs can be dispatched by telephone or printed forms from the stationery counter; pre-printed order, complaint, adjustment, and application forms are replacing their respective written counterparts; the telegram is nearly obsolete. In schools scannable answer sheets designed for computer processing have relieved overburdened teachers of the problem of grading sometimes unintelligible essays. Paradoxically, however, the back to basics movement and the so-called literacy crisis have pointed out that although language use has increased, quality has decreased.

Until I was fortunate enough to be a fellow in the Southside Virginia Writing Project, I had never really given much thought to oral communication's being much less taxing than its written relative. Oral communication is spontaneous; whereas, any idea that is effectively recorded requires thought processes, transference from thought to language, and sufficient mastery of language to express the original idea in all its intricacies. It is easier for a person to say what he thinks than it is to write what he has thought.

During the course of the Institute, participants observed and practiced an approach to teaching writing later defined as a content-directed, experience-based concept. The idea incorporated the principles of the personal essay and at the same time utilized the thought processes of recall and re-creation. Personal experiences are not merely related; they are re-created through the combined use of figurative language, dialogue, and narration. In effect, each act of recollection becomes a tale well told. This technique not only necessitates a command of language usage and syntax, it also promotes objectivity by forcing the author to analyze subjective material with objective instruments: the words he chooses. This approach has much potential because it can be modified to meet a variety of situations.

Content-directed, experience-based writing helps students, particularly under-achievers, to overcome their fear of writing. Also, often the intelligent student will have the least mastery of writing because he fears peer response, teacher censure, or lacks confidence in his ability to use the principles of grammar and usage to express himself on paper. This fear and lack of confidence gradually increase until the student may suffer a mental block when he faces the prospect of writing. Because content-directed, experience-based writing concentrates on subject matter rather than on stenography, the student need not feel threatened by the blank page.

The content-directed, experience-based approach may also be used to solve the problem of what to write. So many times I have assigned what I thought were simple, objective essays, only to find my students staring into space, unable to think of anything to say. With the content-directed, experience-based approach, students possess a wealth of material and, because these experiences are personal, they have meaning and value.

Another advantage is that content-directed, experience-based writing can be used for teaching grammar. Since the writing process necessitates using all grammatical forms, lessons can be based on specific deficiencies. Here again is the idea that students will readily respond to material for which they can see specific functions. Actual practice with correct usage produces reinforcement.

The following are some examples of content-directed, experience-based topics which I have found successful:

- Think back to your childhood, the days before you began school. Many interesting things happened to you; you experienced many new and sometimes frightening emotions. Re-create the first time you can recall being afraid. Be specific: give the time of day, who was present, what was said, what frightened you, who calmed you down, how he or she did it. Then think about the experience that frightened you.

Knowing what you now know, tell how you think you would react if faced with the same situation.

- Again, recall your childhood, the days prior to your attending school. Many people were important to you, especially your favorite friend. Try to remember all the reasons that this person was your favorite friend. Be specific in your description of your relationship.

- Once again, recall your early childhood. This time, try to remember your favorite relative. Think about all the things that made this particular relative special. Over the years, how have your feelings changed? Is this person still your favorite relative?

These are merely possibilities for content-directed and experience-based assignments. Topics may be developed from a variety of experiences, not just those recollected from childhood. Any emotion can be a basis for a writing assignment. Anger will provide a stimulating focal point. There is not a student anywhere who has not experienced anger so severe that he has never forgotten either the incident or the impact.

I have used content-directed, experience-based writing extensively with my senior students, with surprisingly good results. Writers, reluctant at the beginning of the year, are now able to get involved with the subject matter and re-create moments and incidents vividly. In several instances, I have seen evidence of acceleration in critical thinking processes. In addition, penmanship has improved, as students begin to take pride in their work. Student-initiated conferences are frequent, and although most are still reluctant to share their work with the class, they are sharing in an informal, individualized way. It is equally important that my students are now suggesting possible topics for writing assignments, either directly or indirectly through the works that they submit. Content-directed, experience-based writing has been a valuable aid in creating an atmosphere to which my students respond — and in which they grow. ♣

Robert L. Wilson
Shawnee State College, Portsmouth, Ohio

Incorporation in the Act of Sentence Combining

It was near the end of the quarter, and I told the students we'd take a look at how their brains worked. I explained to them that the human brain is like a computer and, that almost as fast as the speed of light, their nervous impulses are decoded by the brain and assimilated into a kind of product sentence/idea.

What takes the brain less than a second to do, we systematically work through in a span of some ten minutes. I especially want my students to develop an awareness of the speed by which highly sophisticated and complex mental functions are performed by the human brain during virtually every moment of human consciousness.

Together we came to grips with the concept of kernel sentences. They learned that all messages are transmitted to the brain as kernel sentences — the manifestation of an idea. Through sentence combining, they became aware of the brain's task to decode each impulse and to assimilate it into the product of earlier decodings about a given topic. In the next context of assimilation, we wrestled with the concepts of coordination and subordination, which, eventually, they came to understand.

First, I had them take the following pair of kernel sentences and combine them coordinately, then subordinately. The most common products appeared as follows:

Impulse 1 The excitement left scars.

Impulse 2 The excitement was unusual.

COORDINATELY: The excitement was unusual, and it left scars.

SUBORDINATELY: The excitement which was unusual left scars.

Some students were quick to observe that in the act of combining it is possible to defy the laws of mathematics. Two ideas can be combined into a product sentence of fewer than two clauses. The most common result of their suggestions was this:

The unusual excitement left scars. Here, one component of the second kernel is salvaged and incorporated into the first kernel. I was quick to point out that anytime the product of combining results in fewer clauses than the number of kernels combined, one has done humanity a favor. After all, brevity in writing is a virtue.

They took me at my word and continued the process, building on the earlier product sentence with additional kernels in the following manner:

IMPULSE

- 3 The excitement took place in Miami.
- 4 The scars were irreparable.
- 5 The scars were left on the inhabitants.
- 6 The inhabitants were natives of Miami.
- 7 The excitement took place last summer.
- 8 Street riots created the excitement.

PRODUCT SENTENCE

- The unusual excitement left scars.
- The unusual excitement which took place in Miami left scars.
- The unusual excitement which took place in Miami left irreparable scars.
- The unusual excitement which took place in Miami left irreparable scars on the inhabitants.
- The unusual excitement which took place in Miami left irreparable scars on the native inhabitants.
- The unusual excitement which took place in Miami last summer left irreparable scars on the native inhabitants.
- The unusual excitement created by the street riots which took place in Miami last summer left irreparable scars on the native inhabitants.

When they had finished, we quickly discovered that $1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1 \neq 8$. Rather, it equalled 2. Hence, they had, this time, grossly defied the laws of mathematics.

We discussed the product sentences resulting from impulses 2 and 4. The students could readily see that *the unusual excitement left scars* was as satisfactory as, if not preferable to, *the excitement which was unusual left scars*. Also, *the unusual excitement which took place in Miami left irreparable scars* was probably more clearly stated than *the unusual excitement which took place in Miami left scars that were irreparable*.

Whether in complex sentence constructions or in simple sentences resulting from the act of combining, subordination became visible to everyone in the class as an act of containment, whereby the more important idea consumed and contained the lesser idea. This was in stark contrast to the product of coordination, where the two clauses exist independently of each other. Graphically, the contrast is this:

COORDINATION = $\square + \square$

SUBORDINATION = $\square \supset$

Simply to become aware of what we were doing in the act of sentence combining was enough to work through the steps of joining related ideas into product sentences. But to derive some of the more subtle insights into the effect that language has on its users and vice versa was a bonus. The fact that we are able to simulate on paper the operation performed by the human brain with each new impulse netted, moreover, the result that was most worth working for.

Together we came to appreciate the sophistication with which the human brain functions as well as the subtleties of meaning that are communicated by the way it combines ideas. We concluded that only the truly observant listener/reader can appreciate the impact that language has on people. ♦

After Leaving George Eliot:

Notes on the Retraining of a Literature Ph.D.

In 1978 I completed my dissertation on *Daniel Deronda* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, and received my Ph.D. from Boston College. Although my primary area of study was the novel, I also had concentrations in Romantic and Victorian poetry, contemporary poetry, and Renaissance literature. But when it came to finding a teaching job in literature, like almost all my peers, I had no luck. After MLA interviews, dossier requests, and the offer of a post-doctoral fellowship in composition, I was suddenly blessed — I was offered a full-time tenure-track assistant professorship in a city I'd grown to love. Never mind that I'd be teaching freshman writing to 125 students who I was told probably hadn't written more than two papers in their high school careers. Having survived five years of junior high and high school teaching, I knew I could cope with large numbers of students; perhaps I could even teach them how to write competently. In September 1978, though I was unaware of it at the time, a metamorphosis began. I was eventually to change from a literature Ph.D. — a generalist schooled in several periods, skilled in close reading — into a writing teacher, someone who answers the question "What do you teach?" with that musical phrase "The writing process." What I once would have labelled jargon became part of my new identity as composition teacher.

Though I now freely admit that my interest in teaching composition was at first expedient, stemming from the exigencies of the market, in the past two years, I have made a deeper commitment to learning more about the composing process. As an assistant professor in the general education college of a large university, I teach only freshman composition, a required two-semester course; my students range from basic to developmental writers, with a handful of students who have good secondary school training in

writing. Each year I have a team of 120 to 130 students divided into four sections. The college's scheduling required that I meet *all* 130 students in a lecture (which I have gradually been converting into a combination of announcements and writing lab, since lecture seems wholly impractical when one is teaching writing); then, I meet twice with the students during the week. This makes a total of nine contact hours, but as any writing teacher knows, one can use up 20 hours a week in conferences. There is almost no way for me to see all of my students, and this is one great source of frustration to all of us who work with great numbers of beginning writers.

I was eventually to change from a literature Ph.D. . . . into a writing teacher, someone who answers the question "What do you teach?" with that musical phrase "The writing process."

When they arrive in September of their freshman year, my students manifest a wide range of problems and skills. Some cannot write or recognize a sentence. Some have mastered the sentence, but cannot write a paragraph. And a few students can write paragraphs, but not a whole essay. Some students are "scribal stutterers" — students who actually have trouble writing even a few sentences or phrases on the page. But the majority of our students can be characterized in the following ways:

- Most students have done very little written work in high school English courses. Instead, they have participated in discussions of literary works and have written an occasional essay. Students report that if they faithfully attended classes and did the

reading for their high schooling courses, and if they submitted *any* sort of writing at all to their teachers when such writing was assigned, they received a B or better.

- Most students have done almost no written work in courses other than English or journalism. If they have, they seem to feel that their history, science, mathematics and foreign language teachers did not "grade for grammar" or "grade for English," but instead, skimmed the writing for factual content.

- Most students are not acquainted with either prewriting or invention procedures. Although some have heard of brainstorming or freewriting, they do not know how to use these processes to help them get started. None of my students appear to be in any way familiar with the Aristotelian *topoi*, Burke's pentad, or the tagmemic heuristic of Young, Becker and Pike.

- Most students experience a fairly high level of "writing anxiety" and are quite candid about this from the very first day of class. Some students have difficulty writing *in* class and find themselves continually unable to meet deadlines. Others are terrified to submit their written work for a grade, or fearful even to submit their first draft to peers in peer review sessions.

- Most students have never looked at writing as a complex, time-consuming process, and have no recollection of their high school teachers having encouraged them to do so. They think of revision primarily as editing or checking spelling errors. Very few know how to re-shape or re-see the written product they have turned out, then to undertake revisions.

Because my students think writing ought to be one short activity, a product turned out as quickly and effortlessly as possible (even though many of them labor over their writing),

I have continued to experience a myriad of problems as I try to make students understand that writing is a complex set of tasks and that it is as much a way of learning as it is a proof that a student has already learned. From my own experiences as a student learning to write (in elementary and secondary school as well as in college and graduate school) and as a professional who must frequently write, I feel strongly that one must make a commitment to writing. But teaching my students how to make such a personal investment in writing has been a real challenge for me. The students I have now are not writers by nature; that is, they do very little "reflexive" writing, to use Janet Emig's term. Almost without exception, they make long distance phone calls home instead of sending letters.

My students are highly visual. They can speak articulately about films and current events; when I sit in on their social science and humanities classes, I am always a bit surprised at how perceptive they are. These are the same students who write murky, confused, error-ridden paragraphs. I am not certain that television is wholly to blame for the phenomenon I've just described, but it is very clear to me that writing is not important to my students in the same way it was to me and my friends in high school and college in the sixties. We shared regular and sometimes voluminous correspondences, wrote birthday poems and letters for each other, and to this day, some of us continue our regular exchanges of letters.

Another problem I experience — particularly now that I am teaching in a program intended to be "interdisciplinary" — is with colleagues outside the division of writing. When my students are called upon to digest large amounts of information (about the Protestant reformation, or about the themes of socialization and desocialization, as il-

lustrated by Jerzy Kozinski's *The Painted Bird*, to use two examples from this year's social science curriculum) and then to write *referential aim* papers, the result is often disastrous. Students forget how to make each paragraph work; grammatical problems, particularly coherency problems like misplaced modifiers or vague pronoun references, multiply. Whatever sense of voice students have developed during the first eight weeks of the course (when they write several versions of expressive essays on autobiographical topics) seems to disappear. After six or eight

... the best of these essays [for social science] sound as though they were written by a computer; in fact, they all seem to be written by the same computer.

weeks of work in expressive writing with at least two versions of each assignment, students are asked to write a 500-word essay for social science and the result is often disorganized, confused prose riddled with mechanical errors. Even more disheartening, however, is the fact that the best of these essays sound as though they were written by a computer; in fact, they all seem to be written by the same computer. The individual voice a student has begun to achieve in the freewriting assignments, in the journal, and in two or three versions of each expressive essay is now submerged, as the student attempts to master the subject area and to deliver what the professor *seems* to want.

Moreover, I find it difficult to persuade my colleagues outside the writing division that writing assignments must be tailored to our students' abilities. Many instructors give assignments which make unrealistic demands on our students, asking them to perform highly abstract operations.

In fact, when I attempted to devise joint assignments with my colleagues, I became frustrated with their reluctance to see writing as a complex set of mental operations. Usually, I would reluctantly accept their assignments, with only minor concessions on their part. In one case, when I gave a paper with the Humanities instructor, most of the students were overwhelmed by the assignment, which asked to summarize, compare, analyze, integrate and speculate — all in one short essay! Students became quite anxious as they began to prepare their first drafts, and they produced final essays which were D or C-minus. I finally had to raise all the grades because I thought that my colleague and I had asked for more than our students were capable of giving. And I promised myself never to agree to another joint essay unless my colleague permitted me to construct the assignment based on my knowledge of students' writing abilities. Clearly, the frustration, anxiety and sense of regression engendered by this assignment did more harm than good.

Whenever something like this happens, I find myself at a loss to explain to colleagues *why* students' writing appears to have regressed. I grope, unable to communicate about what I know to be true about my students, writing abilities, and about the complex process of composing. Though I have spent the last three years reading everything I could find on composition theory, regularly abstracting articles from *CCC*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *College English*, and other journals, I have not come as close to understanding the process as I had hoped to. I read articles reporting results of empirical research and learn what researchers have discovered about the way people revise, or writers' strategies, or the results of intensive sentence-combining instruction, but I feel far from understanding what I call

the mysteries of the writing process: what happens to make a particular student so ready to hear my remarks on misplaced modifiers that she hears it once (even though I have said it fifteen times before) and knows it forever after? What constitutes that special moment when a student moves from incubation on a topic to illumination, and finally understands what he wants to write, how he will write it, and to whom he will write? When I teach revision, how can I teach students how long to wait and what procedures to use in order to see a piece of writing anew, to judge its merits and its flaws, and to reshape and rearrange it to produce a better piece of writing?

Style is not simply elegance and grace, or the icing on the cake, but a basic component of the forming and thinking stages of the composing process.

In Ann Berthoff's description of the 1980 Summer Seminar of Philosophy and the Composing Process, she offers a description of the composing process as one "in which everything happens at once or it doesn't happen at all." I find this particularly relevant to my own work in the past two years, as I attempt to investigate the way freshman composition instructors teach style. So far, I have logged my classes and conferences, noting what it is I tell students about diction, syntax, tone and voice. I am becoming increasingly aware that there is a mismatch between what I think or say I do (and what our departmental syllabus and theme analysis blank officially emphasize), and what I actually convey to my students about matters of style. Moreover, students continue to view the general area of styles as a veneer; often a student who has still not mastered the paragraph (that is, cannot write a paragraph which has an organizing idea, or a topic) will say to me, "The only problem with my writing is my style." Although students obviously oversimplify the problem when they make such remarks, I am beginning to think that style is a large part of their writing problems; that is, if writing is a process in which "everything happens at once or it doesn't happen at all," as Berthoff says, then considerations of style — entailing arrangement, voice and tone, audience awareness, aim, modes and situational context — must come at once, at the moment of illumination.

And reconsideration of style must occur during writing as well as during revision. Thus, style is not simply elegance and grace, or the icing on the cake, but a basic component of the forming and thinking stages of the composing process. Style can be related to an individual's perception and concept formation, as well as to her or his written product.

I was trained in graduate school to teach literature, though I had struggled with the teaching of high school writing for five years before I went to graduate school. I have not found teaching composition to be boring or stultifying, but I have longed for a coherent philosophy to support my day-to-day teaching. I have faithfully attended CCCC and NCTE meetings and the composition sessions at MLA, and have tried to be open to the new research in rhetoric, particularly that conducted by Flower and Hayes, Hake and Williams, and Nold. But I have found limitations in their results. Perhaps this is for the reason that empirical research in the composing process is so new. But each researcher's findings seem so narrow that it appears we must wait years before we will begin to devise a sound theory of composition. At the same time, many researchers' reliance on social science methods makes me uncomfortable. Having given over a large part of my adult life to studying literary theory, literature, and language as writers use it in poetry, plays, essays and novels, I now am frustrated when I think that in order to do respectable work in composition theory, I will have to learn a great deal more about social science research methods, including experimental design, statistics, computer language, and psycholinguistics. Given my intuitive sense that over the past ten years, I have made connections with students and have guided them through forming and thinking to writing, I find it hard to believe that the *only* valid conclusions about the nature of the composing process will come from research done by rhetoricians who join with psycholinguists and cognitive psychologists. The conclusions of such empirical research may have validity, but I suspect — and hope — that we as teachers of composition might also learn by examining closely what it is we do in our classrooms. While we may find some valuable answers to the question "What is it we do when we write?" we may not find *one* answer, as some empirical researchers have suggested we will. ♦

Research in Texas

An Investigation of the Use of Three Prereading Strategies on the Comprehension of Junior High Students

Maude E. Dean-Guildford
Texas Southern University

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of three prereading strategies (Cognitive Organizer, Structured Overview, and Directed Reading Questions) on comprehension and literal, inferential and total comprehension reading skills. The strategies were ranked in terms of their effectiveness, and the effect of each on reading comprehension was analyzed by race, sex and age. Eighth grade students, in a predominantly black school, served as the population sample. They were randomly assigned to one of three strategy treatment groups and a control group.

Four general hypotheses were made with respect to the effect of the strategies on the four areas of comprehension. Three major hypotheses, related to each general hypothesis, investigated the impact of each strategy in the areas. Variations of each strategy impact on the comprehension areas were investigated for categories of race, sex and age.

T-tests were used to analyze the data. The investigator designed ten original forms of each strategy for use with ten selections from *SRA Dimensions: Countries and Cultures* kit. The six item multiple-choice test which accompanied each selection was used as a pretest for content comprehension. Two test items from each pretest were randomly selected to form the content posttest. The comprehension subtest of the *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test Brown Level A* and *B* was used as the pre- and posttest for literal, inferential and total reading comprehension skills.

The major result of this study indicated that the tested prereading strategies improve comprehension. The Structured Overview appeared to be more effective than were the other strategies. Specifically, content comprehension and total comprehension were more affected by the strategies than were literal and inferential reading skills. Personal characteristics such as race, sex and age influenced the impact of the strategies on comprehension. ♦

A Fifth of Parody: Teaching Rhetorical Stance Through Music and Parody

Music has often been used in English classes as an effective aid in teaching various genres of literature. Nancy Anne Cluck (University of Texas at Dallas) has employed musical compositions in teaching literary criticism. In the 1978 *Proceedings: Conference of College Teachers of English of Texas*, Dr. Cluck writes:

This [her procedure] approach to literature through music, another temporal form, can yield rewarding performance from students. They are usually interested from the first because they anticipate from the beginning something other than the same tired examination of the 'deep inner meanings' of one poem after another. The very nature of music itself lends a freshness and a vitality to the critical analysis of literature.¹

Because I believe that musical compositions can also be employed to heighten a student's conception and understanding of the writer's responsibility and role in a given mode of discourse in composition, I conceived a plan for my freshman composition students which allowed them to work with music and relate it creatively to their writing.

Wanting to emphasize "voice," "subject," and "audience response," and the interaction of the three in the students' writing, I chose to have my students work with parody. In parody, there is a definite distinction between these three elements that I felt would be easy for the students to recognize. In addition to supplying comic relief in the middle of what the greatest percentage of the students considered to be a dull semester of writing, they were also afforded an opportunity to be creative and write in a mode which, surprisingly enough, most of them did not recognize. The students had all seen the NBC television program "Saturday Night Live" and had read *Mad* and *National Lampoon* magazines, but they were not aware that the humor in these media was primarily caused by the writers' use of parody. Without using

music, however, I am convinced that the students never would have fully comprehended even the most simplified definition of this genre.

To emphasize how parody is contingent upon the three different precepts evident in composition, I read a portion of Wayne Booth's essay "The Rhetorical Stance":

The common ingredient that I find in all of the writing I admire — excluding for now novels, plays, and poems — is something that I shall reluctantly call the rhetorical stance, a stance which depends on discovering and maintaining a proper balance among three elements: the available arguments about the subject itself; the interests and peculiarities of the audience; and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker. I should like to suggest that it is this balance, this rhetorical stance, difficult as it is to describe, that is our main goal as teachers of rhetoric. Our ideal graduate will strike this balance automatically in any writing that he considers finished.²

After reading this quotation to my students, we discussed, as we had numerous times throughout the semester, the importance of why they were writing compositions ("arguments about the subject"), for whom they were writing them ("audience"), and the manner they chose to convey their thoughts ("voice"). I then cited a simplified definition of parody and asked them how each of Booth's three concepts could be applied to writing it. As I had suspected, they could not see how the three elements functioned in this mode. Telling them to be conscious of the three precepts in composition, I played a tape of the first movement of Beethoven's "Symphony No. 5 in C Minor." This composition was chosen because I knew that most of them would readily recognize the four-note motive that is repeated throughout the movement.

After hearing the composition, we discussed the qualities of the movement they felt to be important: virtuosity, orchestration, and organization. The students agreed that virtuosity was a

quality which the listener or audience, responds to and evaluates. To explain organization, I drew parallels between the classical sonata-allegro form and the five-part essay form: exposition and introduction, development and body, and recapitulation/coda and conclusion. One student remarked that the basic theme of Beethoven's symphony had two parts. To apply her comment to organization, I compared the two-part antecedent and consequence of the symphony's exposition to the thesis statements in the introductory paragraphs of essays.

Telling the students to remember the qualities they found outstanding in the symphony, I played a recording of Walter Murphy's "A Fifth of Beethoven," a disco/rock parody on the first movement of the symphony. We then compared the features of the Beethoven record with Murphy's. They agreed that the Murphy recording was virtuosic, well-orchestrated, and well-organized. In using a metronome, I demonstrated that there was little difference in the basic rhythmic beat between both compositions. We returned to Wayne Booth's three parts of rhetoric, and the students saw that the differences between the two musical pieces were audience, in the response to and recognition of virtuosity; voice, in the treatment of orchestration; and subject, in the manner of organization.

The students were then asked other ways in which the Murphy composition parodied Beethoven's. First, they saw that the title, as in most parodies, was altered to suit the mood of the second selection: a fifth of gin, a fifth of rum, "A Fifth of Beethoven." Second, they saw that it was Beethoven's material, or text, that had been parodied more than his style of composition. And third, they saw that the aspect of virtuosity, although present in both the performances, evoked a different

response from the audience.

The second set of music, although more amusing, was more difficult for the students to view as parody; it was two versions of the song "I Love Paris." In the second set, the Barclay Singers, directed by Michel Legrand, sing a version of "I Love Paris" in French. The arrangement and orchestration is very much like the music heard on easy-listening radio stations. Contrapuntal to this version was a camp arrangement of the same song from the album "Jonathan and Darlene Edwards in Paris," in which Darlene Edwards parodies the styles and arrangements of swing-band singers: her version of the song is a parody of style.

The students then wrote a paragraph in which they could not only define parody but could also recognize the ways in which the two sets of music had clarified a heretofore unfamiliar term. After writing about the manifestations of Booth's principles in the musical selections, the students were then asked to find a serious work and its parody.

The response to this research assignment was overwhelming; all of the students brought examples of parody to the next class session. Several brought art work, music, poetry, essays, and cartoons, and they discussed the manner in which the original works had been parodied and the possible explanations as to why the parody had been produced. The music to which they had listened and the essay by Booth were cited as support for their reasoning.

To reinforce primary goals for the assignment (recognition of subject, audience, and voice), I gave the students several different parodies to read. The first parody examined was one of the Decalogue. The King James version of the Decalogue was read alternately with Arthur Hugh Clough's poem "The Latest Decalogue." The Decalogue states: "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In his parody, Clough writes: "Honour thy parents; that is, all / From whom advancement may befall.³ The students noted that Clough had parodied not only the text of Decalogue, but also the basic style and voice used in the Old Testament.

For an examination of prose, the students read Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and Oliver Jensen's "The Gettysburg Address in Eisenhowerese." Although the students, because of their ages, were not familiar with the

Eisenhower administration, they quickly became aware that Jensen was parodying political jargon.

Finally, the students read Poe's "Annabel Lee" along with Barbara Angell's "Ulabei Lume," two readings in which Angell parodies Poe's rhythm, rhyme, and diction. Poe writes in one of the stanzas:

She was a child and I was a child
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than
love—
I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me.⁴

Angell writes:

I was a child and she was a child
And childishly childlike we'd romp
But we loved with a lovelier love than love
In this old barge on the swamp.
With a love that made winged seraphs in heaven
Foam at the mouth and stomp.⁵

Using these two poems, the students again focussed on Booth's principles of subject, audience, and voice as three entities that are contingent upon each other in good writing. After listening to the musical selections once more, they were then given a copy of the Preamble to the United States Constitution to parody as a practice assignment. For a longer work, they were given a choice between the parable of "The Prodigal Son" and Aesop's fable "The Lion, the Fox, and the Stag." They were also asked to parody another serious work of their choice.

Of the forty-six students in my freshman classes, all but six had their assignments completed by the next class session, and many of them wanted to read their parodies aloud. I was pleased by their enthusiasm and their achievement, but to be totally objective, I had another instructor to grade the papers before I examined them. With only a few exceptions, we concurred on the grades. The lowest grade assigned was a C-. This grade was given to a student who had never made a passing grade on her papers. Of the forty-six students, sixteen (approximately thirty-five percent) made A's.

The best parody was written by a choir director in the class. He chose an anonymous nineteenth century poem from *Gems for the Fireside* entitled "A Kiss at the Door." The original poem is sentimental, tracing a couple's love from its beginning to their death. The student's title is "A Clobber at the Door." He writes:

She stands inside the doorway,
That little wife of mine;
Her bellowing voice rips through the air,

This ought to be a sign;
The frying pan inside her hand,
I now know what's in store;
The lightning swing of angry arms,
As she clobbers me at the door.⁶

Not one student voiced opposition to this project, nor did anyone fail to see how Booth's rhetorical stance functioned in the music, the literature, or the parodies they wrote. By relating subject matter, voice, and audience to parody, the students have gained facility in conceiving the total process of writing, extending their skills to other types of writing. They realized through hearing musical compositions with which they were familiar the differences that can result with an alteration in rhetorical stance.

At the end of this project, the students wrote their reactions. A student responded thus:

The section on parody was extremely interesting. . . . If I had to listen to basic English [grammar and composition] all year, I would go out of my mind Parody got us out of a rut that we seemed to be sinking into—mere repetition. We started to learn something The music was really a change! It brought the finer points into focus. I was actually thinking instead of just absorbing facts.⁷

It is unfortunate that many composition teachers fail to use innovative and interdisciplinary methods in teaching writing. For too long, many English teachers have relied totally upon conventional, often pedantic, and boring methods of presenting rhetoric to their students. It is our goal to enlighten students not only in mechanics, but also to teach them, ultimately, how to create, select, organize, and express themselves in all they do; it seems, then, that whatever sparks enthusiasm and interest in the subjects we teach must be valid. I used music and it worked.

END NOTES

¹Nancy Ann Cluck, "Music and Literary Criticism," *Proceedings: Conference of College Teachers of English of Texas*, 43 (1978), 52.

²Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetorical Stance," in *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 27.

³Arthur Hugh Clough, "The Latest Decalogue," *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. A.L.P. Norrington (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 60-61.

⁴Edgar Allan Poe, "Annabel Lee," *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Arthur M. Eastman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 732.

⁵Barbara Angell, "Ulabei Lume," *American Literature in Parody*, ed. Robert P. Falk (New York: Twayne, 1955), pp. 109-110.

⁶James Roddy, "A Clobber at the Door," MS, pp. 1-2.

⁷Cora Simmons, "Parody," MS, pp. 1-2.

The Teaching of Writing: Is the Public Finally Ready to Support It?

Much public concern has been expressed regarding the poor reading and writing performances of students. As a result states and school districts have mandated testing and remediation programs. Blame for low achieving students has been placed on the socio-economic status of the students, poor discipline, elective programs in English, and not teaching the "basics." However, little public attention has been focused on the actual amount of time English teachers have to work with students. The Modern Language Association and the National Council of Teachers of English have been concerned with the problem since 1909. English educators contend that adequate instruction in the basic skills of reading and writing can be given students in regular rather than remedial classes if English class loads are low enough to permit the teacher adequate preparation and grading time for individual students. Currently money is being spent on remedial programs rather than on developmental ones. It would be much better for the school instructional program and for individual students to provide a student-teacher ratio that would provide optimum instruction the first time through rather than expending funds after the damage has been done.

In 1909 the Modern Language Association appointed a committee to study the labor and cost of the teaching of English. Its final report published in 1923 recommended that the teaching of composition be treated as a laboratory course with teacher loads appropriate for a laboratory situation. From an analysis of writing assignments and grading time, the committee concluded that the number of students assigned to a single teacher (128.6 students per teacher between 1909-1911) was two-

and-a-half times the proper number and further speculated whether the public might at some future date be willing to support a situation in which capable teachers would be able to work with individual students on a student-teacher ratio commensurate with the above recommendations.

Fifty-seven years later the student load is even higher. According to *A Survey of Teaching Conditions in English, 1977*, Applebee reported that a "typical" English teacher has more than two preparations and five classes with 26-30 students per class, or a total teaching load of approximately 150 students.

In 1955 William Dusel conducted a study for the California Council of Teachers of English which illustrated the close relationship between teacher load and the effective teaching of composition. He asked 430 experienced teachers to grade a one-page typed composition (about 250 words) just as they would their own students' papers and to record how much time it took while working as rapidly as possible. The time needed for marking ranged from 3.5 minutes for simply assigning a grade to 8.6 minutes for marking which would teach "writing and thinking." Assuming one such paper per student per week, a teacher with 125 students would spend 18 hours per week grading themes alone to teach writing and thinking. Teachers with 150 students would need almost 22 hours of theme grading time. Obviously the easiest way for teachers to reduce grading time is to simply assign a grade—thus reducing their theme grading time from 22 to 9 hours a week. However, in another Applebee study, "Teaching High Achieving Students: A Survey of the Winners of the 1977 NCTE Achievement Awards in

Writing," department heads reported that over three-fourths of a student's papers would be corrected not only for mechanical errors and assigned a grade but commented on in such a way as to teach writing and thinking, thus indicating that English teachers do spend many hours grading.

Applebee further reported in his study of high achieving students a significant relationship between class size and writing instruction. In smaller classes, teachers in the study were more likely to discuss papers with their students both during and after writing rather than merely assign a grade. It is apparent from the Applebee study on High-Achieving Students that significantly more writing is accomplished in English than in other academic classes, therefore creating a disproportionate amount of grading for English teachers. Students wrote almost twice a week in English classes and considerably less than once a week in other academic subject areas surveyed.

In the cited research, principal attention was focused on the time needed for teaching composition; however, the time spent in class preparation and the relationship between reading and written language should not be overlooked; neither should the role of the textbook and such materials as supplemental novels, poetry and short story anthologies.

A study conducted in 1974 (Evanchko *et al*) investigated the relationship between student performance in reading (receptive language art) and writing (expressive language art). The findings indicated a high correlation between the two processes of language. The researchers concluded that the classroom teacher can increase student reading performance

by giving increased attention to writing.

SUMMARY

Since 1909 the English profession has asked for a lower number of students per teacher so that language arts skills can be taught effectively. There is a large body of research that shows students write better compositions when English class loads are smaller. Research indicates a strong correlation between student writing ability and student reading ability. There is evidence that shows that students are not performing in reading and writing as well as the public expects. Remedial programs in language arts to help students achieve competence have been mandated by the state and local district. English teachers are virtually the only teachers who teach writing skills, thus increasing the amount of time (from 10 to 25 hours per week according to the quality of grading papers) English teachers spend grading as compared with teachers in other academic areas.

CONCLUSIONS

English teachers will be able to teach reading, writing, language and thinking more effectively when their class and student load is commensurate with the amount of preparation time and grading time necessary for the development of student language skills. The public is now apparently ready to pay for the effective teaching of these skills as indicated by the monies appropriated by the state and the district for remediation. However, why spend the money on remedial programs when by allowing adequate resources, time, and reduced student load to the regular teacher, adequate instruction and learning can occur for most students in the regular classroom?

END NOTES

- Applebee, Arthur N. *A Survey of Teaching Conditions in English, 1977*. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, 1978.
- Applebee, Arthur N. "Teaching High-Achieving Students: A Survey of the Winners of the 1977 NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing." *Research in the Teaching of English*, 12 (December 1978), pp. 3-4.
- Evanechko, Peter, Lloyd Ollila, and Robert Armstrong. "An Investigation of the Relationships Between Children's Performance in Written Language and Their Reading Ability." *Research in the Teaching of English*, 8:3 (Winter 1974), pp. 315-26.
- Texas Education Agency. *The Texas Assessment Project: Writing*, 1977. 🗺️

Gloria O. McGettigan
Humble Independent School District

Teaching Students to Think

During the past few years teachers have been pressured into examining accountability and competency based testing as concrete measurements of classroom productivity. This has caused a real interest in a return to basic skill teaching where the measurements are easy to record. Basic skills should always be taught thoroughly and need to be mastered if the student is going to have the building blocks necessary to progress at higher levels. However, this is not all the student needs and should not be the end-all for deciding on his competency to graduate.

What is the real value of education? Education should enrich the students' life enough in all areas of study so that they will have the tools to make decisions and to solve problems as adults. In order to accomplish this goal, the teacher must encourage and provide the opportunity for the students to think.

How does a teacher accomplish this? First, the student needs to understand the logic behind carefully prepared lesson plans and to understand the thinking skill process the teacher is trying to get the student to use. Students today often rebel at homework and want classroom time in which to do it so they have after school hours free to work. Classroom time should be jealously guarded and fully utilized by the teacher as the time to explain, to expand upon, and to elicit responses on the material being studied so basic skills are mastered, and the thinking processes are stimulated. This can be accomplished through carefully planned discussion and questions and creative assignments.

How does a teacher explain the logic behind lesson plans and to what thinking process they are aimed to develop? I have successfully used a chart which illustrates Dr. Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of the levels of

thinking in classes of average and slow students. Each of the steps on the chart which is posted on the classroom bulletin board indicates the type of activity or behavior that will show the student and the teacher the level of thinking at which the mind is operating. (See chart below.) By referring to the chart periodically in class and describing the level of thinking and learning the day's lesson is directed to, the student gradually becomes aware of the madness behind the method!

But the chart alone is not enough for the student to learn about. By using the analogy of the brain and a computer, the student can recognize the need to have input and practice in the areas of thinking and learning being stressed so that it will become easier to draw upon and to build upon in the future. This helps reduce resistance to homework and to assignments because the purpose is understood. It is amazing how an intelligent class discussion of teaching methods, the reasons why, and what is currently known about how the brain works and how people learn appeals to students. It is an adult discussion and helps them to recognize and to accept differences in learning within the class. It also elicits the student's cooperation in being patient while a student who needs a little more time to think before answering a question in class ponders silently.

There are several other advantages in using the chart to teach thinking. It helps students to recognize the difference between good teaching and lazy teaching and to respect the former. By the end of the year students are able to evaluate those teachers who have, often unknowingly, prepared lessons and discussions that led the student to the highest level of thinking, evaluation.

Also, by starting any new lesson in class with the lowest level of knowledge (basic skill information), the

EVALUATION - one appraises, compares, contrasts, judges, supports, makes decisions.

SYNTHESIS - one sees a new whole, symbols; creatively combines, compares, organizes, renames, rearranges.

ANALYSIS - one diagrams, breaks into parts, distinguishes, infers, selects, points out, subdivides, sees causes and effects, relationships.

APPLICATION - one changes, demonstrates, produces, shows the use of, modifies, manipulates.

COMPREHENSION - one estimates, explains, generalizes, infers, gives examples, paraphrases, rewrites, summarizes.

KNOWLEDGE - one defines, describes, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, selects, states.

The Levels of Thinking and Acting

teacher avoids the trap of becoming an assumptive teacher and is able to successfully progress up the ladder through class discussion, written assignments, research, and creative related activities to lead the student into the higher processes of convergent and divergent thinking.

I stumbled across this medium as an aid to effective teaching while taking classes on how to teach the gifted and talented. Bugged down in graduate courses for slow learners and reading problems, I needed a change of pace and a new perspective. The student who is gifted and talented is able to make the leaps and bounds and connections between these processes of thinking naturally in most cases. That is why he/she is gifted and talented. The computer brain makes jumps and leaps the average and below average student is not able to do.

Using the hypothesis: If man's brain does work like a computer and needs the data on tape before he retrieves information or solves problems, then why couldn't students be exposed to these thinking processes (thereby putting them into the computer/brain) and carefully led to use them effectively by training, if not by natural ability? My success in trying to prove this hypothesis has been measured objectively when concrete actions of thinking levels

are performed in class and subjectively when student attitudes change toward the value of their classroom learning.

Education fosters an elitist system when only the brightest students are encouraged to be the decision makers, problem solvers, and leaders for tomorrow. All students should be given this advantage, and while a lot of the thinking cannot be measured on a basic skill test nor will all students be able to perform the higher level thinking processes, it should not be ignored in favor of competency based testing.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe said: "If you treat a man as he is he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be, and could be, he will be that bigger and better man." Programmed instruction and competency based testing are geared to the lowest level of thinking skills, knowledge and limited comprehension, and are successful mediums for what they are designed to measure. But our students are worth more from us as professionals, and instead of lowering classroom standards year after year, they must be raised. The greatest challenge for a teacher today is to try to develop the multiple talents of the students, to help them to think so they can reach their fullest potential as individuals capable of assuming responsibility for themselves and their society. ➤

Research in Texas

Collation of Literary Texts by Microcomputer

Chris Willerton
Abilene Christian University

Computer programs to collate literary texts and make concordances have been developed over the past fifteen years but have been feasible only at major universities, only in the more complicated programming languages, and only for use on massive computers. I plan to write a collating program in BASIC or LISP that will work on a home computer. My pilot project will be a table of variants for Walter Pater's *Greek Studies*. Eventually I will want to develop a concording program which would use the same disc files as the collating program.

Crucial Elements of Writing as Determined by Non-English and English Faculty

David B. Merrell
Abilene Christian University

Research is in progress at Abilene Christian University to determine and compare the elements of writing that both the ACU general faculty (non-English) and the ACU faculty consider the most crucial to the quality of student writing. Volunteer readers from both groups read and rate a set of samples of student writing holistically. Ratings are analyzed to determine subgroups of readers. The project is funded by the ACU Research Council.

(The following accounts of research and researchers in Texas are summaries of presentations made by students at the Sixteenth Annual Convention of TJCTE, San Antonio. The reader is referred to page 96 of this issue for a further account by a promising young Texas researcher.)

The Effects of Training in the Skill of Taking Notes from Written Material on Seventh Grade Students

Mary Lu Wiley
Houston

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of training on notetaking performance by seventh grade students and to ascertain what influence this training had on the students' performance on tests of literal recall.

Six classes (two accelerated, two average, and two slower) made up three control and three experimental groups. All subjects took two pretests, one passage at the median reading level for all classes; the other tests were prepared at the median class reading level. The experimental classes were trained in notetaking from written material by completing at least twelve lessons from Unit V "Notetaking and Outlining" from Science Research Associates *Organizing and Reporting Skills* (1978). The control classes had no formal training.

After the period of training for the experimental groups, all groups took notes from passages similar to the pretests. Notetaking Efficiency Quotients were calculated.

Four days after the two posttests of notetaking, all students were allowed to review their notes prior to taking a test of literal recall. The percentage of ideas found in the notes was correlated with the score on the test of recall.

The data were analyzed using statistical calculations of frequencies, breakdowns, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The following conclusions were drawn:

- Seventh grade students who received training in notetaking scored higher on a test of notetaking efficiency on both common passages and passages prepared for readability.
- No significant difference was found due to sex.
- No significant difference was found due to age.
- Group membership was significant in improving scores of notetaking efficiency. The accelerated group improved most, the slower group improved second best, the average group improved but not to a significant degree.

- There was a high positive significant correlation between the number of ideas found in the notes and scores on tests of literal recall on the Common Test. Although there was a positive correlation between ideas and recall on the Level Tests, the correlation was not significant.

- Both the accelerated group and the average group showed significant correlation between their literal recall test scores and the number of ideas found in their notes, on tests controlled for readability. The slower group showed the lowest correlation between the number of ideas found in notes and scores on tests of literal recall.

The Impact of Two Types of Reading Skills Development Activities on Listening Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

Kmal Maheshawari
North Forest Independent School
District, Houston

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of two different types of instructional material for reading skills development on two groups of predominantly black middle school students in a lower middle and middle class community. This was accomplished by measuring the difference between the changes in listening vocabulary and reading comprehension (literal, inferential, and total). One group (the experimental group), utilized the newspaper and newspaper related activities to facilitate development, reinforcement, and enrichment. The basal reader and its workbook activities were used by the other group (the control group). In addition, intervening variables of reading level, sex, and age were assessed to determine their impact.

Procedures. The experimental group consisted of 161 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students reading on levels five, six, and seven as measured by the Sucher Allred Reading Placement Inventory. Assignment to experimental and control groups was made randomly within grade and reading levels. Following a pretest, the experimental group completed structured newspaper activities while the

control group completed basal reader workbook activities for a six week period. Both groups were tested before and after the Auditory Vocabulary subtest and the Reading Comprehension subtest of the *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Text* Brown Level, Forms A and B. The groups were described on the basis of the study variables with percentages for each category: reading level, sex, and age. The data were analyzed using appropriate measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion. Analysis of variance designs were used with the F-tests and appropriate t-tests. The .05 statistical significance level was used as criteria for acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses.

Findings. Highly significant differences between the changes occurred in the listening vocabulary, inferential, and total comprehension of the students using structured newspaper activities. No significant differences between the changes occurred in the same areas for students using basal reader skills activities. For both groups, the difference between the changes in literal comprehension failed to reach significance. The more significant total comprehension scores are indicative of a positive effect of daily structured newspaper activities.

The differences between the changes in listening vocabulary were greater for the upper reading levels (six and seven) and among 13- and 12-year olds. There was no significant difference between the sexes.

Upper reading levels, females and older students showed greater change difference in inferential comprehension. No appreciable difference occurred between the literal comprehension changes when controlling for reading levels, sex, and age. The more significant difference in changes for total comprehension occurred among those reading on level 6, females, and older students.

Although the reading level, age, and sex were not consistent in their impact upon performance on the reading skills measured, the experimental group performed significantly higher in listening vocabulary, inferential comprehension and total comprehension. This indicates that the newspaper and structured newspaper activities provide a valuable resource and can be effective in developing reading skills. ♦



Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English

Executive Board

Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English
1980-81

Executive Committee

President: Martha Thomas, Texas Education Agency, 7920 Rockwood Lane, Apt. 219, Austin 78578
President-Elect: Ed Kotch, La Marque ISD, 1413 Noble, Texas City 77590
Vice-President, Membership: Anne R. Catalani, North East ISD, 300 Tamworth Drive, San Antonio 78213
Vice-President, Programs: Thelma (Tee) Davis, Dallas ISD, 7106 Indian Ridge Trail, Dallas 75232
Vice-President, Workshops: Billie Lofton, Pine Tree ISD, 1608 Springdale, Longview 75604
Corresponding Secretary: Ellen Nance, Clear Creek ISD, 812 Byrne, Houston 77009
Recording Secretary: Pat Sullivan, West Texas State University, Box 908, WT Station, Canyon 79061
Treasurer: Addie Ratliff, DeLeon ISD, 875 Kingland, Stephenville 76401

Ex-Officio

Executive Secretary: Fred Tarpley, ETSU, Commerce 75428
English in Texas, Editor: Ernestine P. Sewell, UTA, Arlington 76019
NCTE Liaison: Alberta Maddox, Kingsville ISD, Box 1593, Kingsville 78363
Past President: Evelyn McMillen, Dallas ISD, 6010 Royal Crest Drive, Dallas 75230

Affiliate Representatives

Central Texas Council: Ed Farrell, EDB 406, UT at Austin, Austin 78578
Coastal Bend Area Council: Vivian Eubanks, 4317 Acushnet, Corpus Christi 78410
East Texas Council: Wynell Webb, Henderson ISD, Box 728, Henderson 75562
Fort Worth Council: Julie Landry, 6213 Shorewood Drive, Arlington 76016
Greater Dallas Council: Joy Cody, Richland College, 2627 Larry, Garland 75041
Houston Area Council: Mary E. Getty, 7622 Cayton Avenue, Houston 77061
North Harris County Council: Mary Beth Bauer, 1507 Lehman Road, Houston 77018
Northeast Texas Area Council: Glenn Irvin, ETSU, Commerce 75428
Panhandle Council: Charmane Crawford, 409 Franklin, Panhandle 79068
Rio Grande Valley Council: Mike McClure, McAllen High School, McAllen 78501
San Antonio Area Council: Margaret Dukes, North East ISD, 10333 Broadway, San Antonio 78286
South Plains Area Council: Karen McGlaun, 6014 Oxford Street, Lubbock 79413
Southeast Texas Council: Tim Summerlin, Lamar University, Beaumont 77710
Spring Branch Council: Sheila Ford, 7327 Beechnut, Houston 77024

Membership Committee Representatives

Four-Year College: Bill Fleming, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville 77340 (3-30-81)
Two-Year College: Bob Miller, Midland College, Midland 79073 (3-30-83)
Supervisors: Carol Kuykendahl, Houston ISD, 3 South, 3830 Richmond, Houston 77027 (3-30-83)
Elementary: Loraine Burns, Spring Branch ISD, 802 Daria, Houston 77079 (3-30-82)
Secondary: Vivian Eubanks, Corpus Christi ISD, 4317 Acushnet, Corpus Christi (3-30-83)

Regional Representatives

Central: W.R. Crump, University Junior High, Waco 76708 (3-30-83)
East: Beth Robinson, Box 175, Quitman 75783 (3-30-81)
North: Gail Witt, 1201 E. Franham, Irving 75071 (3-30-83)
West: Wayne Dickey, 4013-48th Street, Lubbock 79400 (3-30-)

Standing Committee Officers

Budget: Addie Ratliff, DeLeon
Elections: Wallace Bost, San Angelo
Publications: Robert Caldwell, Dallas
State of the Profession: Lois Haney, Georgetown
Nominations: Delores Obermiller, Corpus Christi

ENGLISH IN TEXAS is the official journal of the Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English, affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. All correspondence is addressed to Ernestine P. Sewell, English Department, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019.

ENGLISH IN TEXAS is published quarterly by TJCTE, with the support of The University of Texas at Arlington, to disseminate current pedagogical and professional practices. Foci are announced in the spring issue. Contributors are asked to limit manuscripts to ten double-spaced typed pages and to consult the *MLA Handbook* for form; articles are subject to editing for length. Illustrations and pictures are welcome. Footnotes and references should be incorporated within the text. Two copies of the paper should be sent with an abstract of 100 words and return postage. Articles published do not reflect the viewpoints of TJCTE or the editors. The use of non-sexist language is recommended.

Editor

ERNESTINE P. SEWELL
Associate Editor
JANET H. POTVIN

Consulting Editors

ROBERT CALDWELL, SMU, Dallas; LAWRENCE CLAYTON, Hardin-Simmons, Abilene; DELRYN FLEMING, Eastfield, Dallas; VIVIAN DAVIS, Dallas ISD; SYLVIA GRIDER, TAMU, College Station; CHARLES E. LINCK, JR., ETSU, Commerce; JOYCE MCGOWAN, UTA, Arlington; BETTY MOORE, SWSTC, San Marcos; MARGARET SIMPSON, San Jacinto, Pasadena; PAT SULLIVAN, WTSU, Canyon; WILLIAM TANNER, TWU, Denton; JACK WAGES, Texas Tech, Lubbock.

Reporters

Beverly Blalock, Mavis Brown, Judith Comstock, Lanny Cawthon, Glenn Freedman, Carl Maloney, Arthur S. Pritchard, Evelyn Romig, Sally Slaughter, Sandra Shott, John Stiles.

Payment of TJCTE membership fee of \$5.00 entitles members to all regular Council publications. Libraries subscribe at the same rate, single copies \$1.50. Checks should be made to the Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English and mailed to Fred Tarpley, Department of Literature and Languages, East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas 75428.

Copyright © 1981 by the Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English. All rights are reserved and reproduction without written permission is prohibited. Second class postage is paid at East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas.

Printed at the University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019.